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ABSTRACT

This self-study report is part of the Peralta Community College District's recruiting project, Operation Call Back. Former students who had been enrolled at Laney College for at least one term between Spring 1972 and Summer 1973 were invited by letter to reenroll, and 2,668 (14%) of the total population of 19,812 were surveyed by telephone to ascertain the reasons for their nonreturning status. The survey showed that females in the sample had a slightly greater tendency not to return than the males. The majority of nonreturnees were in the age bracket twenty to twenty-five years. The two major reasons for not returning to college were employment (39%), and transfer to another school (23%); other reasons cited included moving to another area, family responsibilities, and enlisting in the service, as well as perceived poor quality of the college. Of least importance were the two areas within the scope of the college: lack of availability of a course or program (3.6%) and "too hard or failing" (1%). It was concluded that "drop out" seems an invalid term to be applied to the nonreturning student, since the term "drop out" implies failure of the student as well as of the college. (ER)

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THE NON-RETURNING STUDENTS

WHO ARE THEY?

WHY HAVE THEY NOT RETURNED?

SPRING, 1974

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Aims and Objectives
Committee

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LANEY COLLEGE

Office of Research and Development

THE NON-RETURNING STUDENTS

I

Purpose of the Study

This study constitutes an element of Laney College's continued self-evaluation. A district-wide recruiting effort, Operation Call Back, provided the opportunity to implement the project. The study was designed to (1) gather information on the type of student who did not return and (2) determine the major reasons why these former students did not continue their education at Laney College.

II

Procedure of the Study

A letter from the college president was sent to 19,812 students who had not re-enrolled during the past 1½ years. The letter invited them to return and requested their assessment concerning the degree that Laney College had met their needs.

Faculty and staff volunteered time to follow up this letter with telephone calls to provide these students with information on the college and ascertain the primary reasons for their non-returning status. The results of these interviews were carefully recorded and analyzed to indicate the findings noted in this report.

III

The Population and Sample

The total population included 19,812 former students who were enrolled for at least one term from Spring, 1972 to Summer, 1973. Of these, twenty-six percent (26.2%) or 5,186 were called. Fourteen percent (2,668) of the total population was actually interviewed; 3% made counseling appointments and the remaining 11% indicated they would be unable to return for the Spring term.

Complete data was gathered on 1,195 of these non-returning students. Thus the findings of the study are based on actual interviews with 7% of the total population or 23% of all students who were called and 59% of those who indicated they definitely would not return for the Spring, 1974 term.

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IV

Discussion of Findings:

WHO ARE THE NON-RETURNING STUDENTS?

The sample statistics reveal that females have a slightly greater tendency (1.6%) not to return than males. Persons between 20 and 45 years of age account for 87.1% of all non-returning students with the majority (54.1%) in the 20 to 25 age bracket. In contrast, those under 20 and over 45 exhibit a greater tendency to continue in college.

An analysis of the age-sex correlations indicates that females between 20 and 25 years of age are the most likely not to return although a majority (53.4%) of non-returning males are in the same age group. This trend is reversed in the 25 to 45 age group as well as persons over 45. In both instances, males have a significantly higher tendency not to re-enroll than their female equivalents.

Conversely, the findings also indicate that the probability of persistence (students who continue) is greatest among females from 25 to 45 and males under 20. Males between 20 and 25 and females over 45 are more likely to continue than their counterparts.

V

Discussion of Findings:

WHY HAVE THEY NOT RETURNED?

The question why did they not return is a measure of the effectiveness of the college meeting the needs of the community it serves. Further it allows the college to review the information in light of those factors that are within and beyond its control. Within this context, it appears that the major reasons for the non-returning status of most former students are either beyond the control of the college or indicate a degree of satisfaction with its services. The three major reasons were "employment" (39.2%), transfer to another school 22.7%) and "other" (17%)*. Lack of interest in any additional education was cited by 9.1% of the respondents. Of least importance were the two areas within the scope of the college: lack of availability of a course or program (3.6%) and "too hard or failing" (1.0%).

These reasons are related to the rates of persistence among the age and sex distribution of the population. Employment is the largest factor among both sexes in every age group. Persons between 20 and 45 cited employment, transfer, and "other" as the major reasons for their non-returning status.

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*Employment included: leaving to accept a job, a change in working hours and/or a conflict between selected classes and a work schedule. Transfer indicated attending a four year institution or another community college, usually outside the area. Other incorporated family responsibilities (29%), moving from area (27.3%), enlisted in service (7.5%), poor quality of college (7.5%) and miscellaneous items as concern for personal safety in the area.

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The highest rate of non-returnees is among females between 20 and 25 years of age; for them, transferring to another college ranked first (31.7%), then employment (28.3%), and other (17.8%)*. Similarly, males from 20 to 25 listed employment (42.1%), transferring (29.2%) and "other" (13.7%). Conversly, those areas within the scope of the college were ranked the lowest by both groups. Availability of courses and programs affected 3.8% of the males and 4.8% of the females. The problem of difficulty with college work rated 0.6% from the males and 1.5% from the females in this group.

Availability of courses and the level of difficulty were cited principally by females. A minority of females under 20 (2.5%) as well as a few (2.1%) between 25 and 45 cited course difficulty as a problem. Course availability was also cited by 4.8% of females between 20 and 25 and by 5.7% of those between 25 and 45. Males under 20 (3.2%) and between 20 and 25 (3.8%) accounted for the major groups indicating this as a major barrier.

Lack of interest in further education was usually cited by males over 20 (10%) and particularly those over 45 (27.9%). It also posed a problem for some females under 20 (10%) but this became less important as the age range increased and accounted for only 4.9% of females over 45.

VI

Conclusion:

WHO IS THE DROP OUT?

The "drop out" rate at Laney is frequently cited as an example of the failure of the college to meet student needs. The results of this study seem to question the validity of the term, "drop out" as applied to the non-returning student.

The term "drop out" implies failure of the student as well as the college. Yet the reasons listed by actual non-returning students do not seem to indicate failure. Are employment, transfer, or graduation automatic indications of failure? Should family responsibilities or enlistment in the service be equated with inability to cope in a college situation? Is a basic lack of interest in further education or the problem of course difficulty the total responsibility of the student or the college? Are Laney's programs or services so divorced from student needs that they do not wish to return? Is "drop out" a proper label for every student who does not continue? Based on this study, it seems that these and related issues merit serious re-examination by the entire Laney community.

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*Other included: marriage, pregnancy and child care as the major reasons.

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TABLE 1

BREAKDOWN OF INTERVIEW POPULATION

N=5186

CATAGORY	N	%
No Answer	2518	48.6
Not Return	2033	39.2
Appointments	635	12.2
TOTAL	5186	100%

TABLE 2

AGE/SEX DISTRIBUTION OF NON-RETURNING SAMPLE

N=1195

	SAMPLE		0-20		20-25		25-45		45 +	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
MALES	588	49.2	31	43.7	314	48.6	200	50.8	43	51.2
FEMALES	607	50.8	40	56.3	332	51.4	194	49.2	41	48.8
TOTAL	1195	100	71	100	646	100	394	100	84	100

	SAMPLE		MALES		FEMALES	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-20	71	5.9	31	5.3	40	6.6
20-25	646	54.1	314	53.4	332	54.6
25-45	394	33.0	200	34.0	194	32.0
45 +	84	7.0	43	7.3	41	6.8
TOTAL	1195	100	588	100	607	100

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TABLE 3

REASONS FOR NON-RETURN

N=1195

CATAGORY	N	%
Employment	469	39.2
Transferred	271	22.7
Graduated	88	7.4
Too Hard	12	1.0
Course Not Available	43	3.6
Not Interested	109	9.1
Other	203	17.0
TOTAL	1195	100%

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TABLE 4

REASONS FOR NON RETURN: DISTRIBUTION BY SEX

N=1195

CATAGORY	SAMPLE		MALES		FEMALES	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employment	469	39.7	259	44.0	210	34.6
Transferred	271	22.7	120	20.4	151	24.9
Graduated	88	7.4	37	6.3	51	8.4
Too Hard	12	1.0	2	0.3	10	1.6
Course Not Available	43	3.6	15	2.6	28	4.6
Not Interested	109	9.1	68	11.6	41	6.8
Other	203	17.0	87	14.8	116	19.1
TOTAL	1195	100%	588	100%	607	100%

AGE/SEX DISTRIBUTION

	0-20				20-25				25-45				45 +			
	M		F		M		F		M		F		M		F	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employment	11	35.5	12	30.0	132	42.1	94	28.3	99	49.5	78	40.2	17	39.5	26	63.4
Transferred	14	45.1	15	37.5	76	29.2	105	31.7	28	1.4	31	16.0	2	4.7	0	0
Graduated	2	6.5	0	0	17	5.4	33	9.9	18	7.0	12	6.2	0	0	6	14.6
Too Hard	0	0	1	2.5	2	0.6	5	1.5	0	0	4	2.1	0	0	0	0
Course Not Available	1	3.2	1	2.5	12	3.8	16	4.8	2	1.0	11	5.7	0	0	0	0
Not Interested	1	3.2	4	10.0	32	10.2	20	6.0	23	11.5	15	7.7	12	27.9	2	4.9
Other	2	6.5	7	17.5	43	13.7	59	17.8	30	15.0	43	22.1	12	27.9	7	17.1
TOTAL	31	100%	40	100%	314	100%	332	100%	200	100%	194	100%	43	100%	41	100%